II. The Benchmark System for Monitoring the Countywide Planning Policies: *Benchmarking as a Strategy for Change*

Background

In 1990 the Washington State Legislature passed the Growth Management Act (GMA). For the first time in the State's history, all urban counties and their cities were required to develop and adopt comprehensive plans and regulations to implement the plans. To achieve an interjurisdictional coordinated countywide plan, GMA further required that King County and its 35 cities first develop framework policies - the King County *Countywide Planning Policies* - to guide the development of the jurisdictions' plans.

The *Countywide Planning Policies* (CPPs) define the countywide vision for the county and cities' plans. The policies were developed by the Growth Management Planning Council, a group of 15 elected officials representing all King County citizens. They were adopted by the Metropolitan King County Council, and ratified by the cities in 1994.

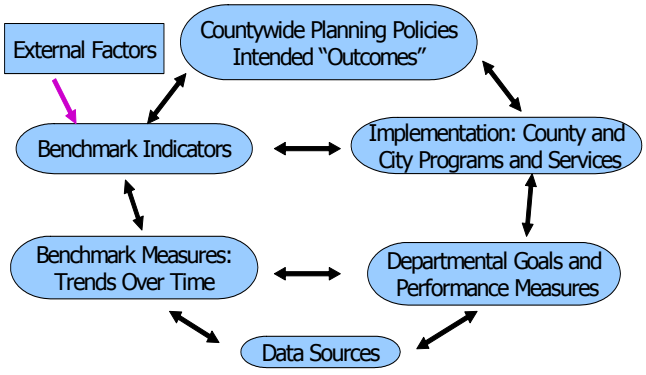
Purpose

The Countywide Planning Policies are primarily goals that, if properly implemented, should improve the quality of life in King County during the next twenty years. As one of the first and most durable efforts at monitoring outcomes in the public sector, the King County Benchmark Program demonstrates how measurement of broad quality-of-life outcomes can help determine if public policy and programs are making a difference.

The purpose of King County's Benchmark Program is to provide the Growth Management Council and other users with a method for:

- Evaluating the progress of the County and its jurisdiction in managing growth, and in
- Implementing the goals outlined in the Countywide Planning Policies

It is a strategy for a change: it alerts us to what we are doing well, and to where we need to do better. As such, it is intimately connected to both the policy goals that it monitors, and to the strategic planning, programs, and services that are intended to implement those goals. The diagram below is one way of envisioning the interplay of policy, program implementation and outcome monitoring.



High-level indicators such as the 45 Benchmark Indicators, selected in 1995 for monitoring by the GMPC, are often affected by external factors outside the control of government agencies. Some, such as the economic indicators, are less responsive to local government strategies than others, such as land use indicators. But good policy implies implementation, and its intention is to create real, long-term improvement in the quality of our lives in King County. Tracking these indicators lets policy-makers know if that improvement is happening.

Why a Benchmark Report for the Countywide Planning Policies?

Generally, the Indicators that the Benchmark Committee has produced should be used as the GMPC originally intended: to enable future decision makers to determine whether or not the *Countywide Planning Policies* are being implemented in a way which achieves their intended outcomes.

The Benchmark Indicators should provide early warning if the policies are not having their desired effects. In that case, the system should provide sufficient information to enable policy-makers to determine whether different actions to implement the policies are needed, or whether minor or major revisions to the policies are required. The Benchmark System can also be used to help the jurisdictions of King County establish priorities, take joint actions, and direct resources to solve problems identified in the *Countywide Planning Policies*.

Same Benchmarks, New Format

The King County Benchmark Program is in its eighth year of publishing an annual report on progress in meeting the Countywide Planning Policies. This year it comes to its readers in a new bi-monthly format. This format is experimental and will be evaluated in mid-2004. It will consist of five issues. The Land Use Indicators were published at the end of August, 2003. The Economic Indicators will be published in October, the Affordable Housing in December, with Transportation and Environmental Indicators to follow in February and April of 2004.

Highlights of the 2003 Benchmark Indicators for ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT and LAND USE

This year's Economic and Land Use Indicators show some significant changes in the trends that have been evident over the last 10 years, as well as the continuation of positive movement towards many of the Countywide Policy goals. As usual, there is much good news, and some bad news.

In the economic sphere we are now seeing the effects of several years of recession on wages, and on personal and household income. While wages and income continue to move slightly upward in current dollars, we are losing ground in real, after-inflation dollars. There has been a modest turn-around in the formation of new businesses – a good indicator of the vitality of the economy. While King County lost over 2,000 businesses between 2000 and 2001, it regained over half of those during 2001 – 2002. However, unemployment remains higher than it has been for over a decade, and as a consequence the number of individuals living below the federal poverty threshold has risen. If there is any positive side to a recession it may be in the education sphere: graduation rates have leveled out somewhat as the poor economy makes staying in school more attractive to high school students than leaving school for a job.

We are continuing to control growth in the rural areas and reduce suburban sprawl. We are developing and redeveloping urban land at rates that nearly match those of the late 1990s. We are achieving strong urban-level densities that match or exceed the densities for which we have planned. However, while Seattle and Bellevue's Urban Centers continue to grow, there has been little or no new residential development occurring in many of the suburban Urban Centers.

The highlights published in this report are only a selection of the data published in the full reports. The reports that will be published throughout this year are intended to alert County decision-makers to aspects of growth which are problematic, and to which we need to pay further attention, as well as to encourage the continuance of policies and programs that are making a positive difference.

Up and down arrow symbols are used to show whether the direction of change has been primarily positive or negative or difficult to determine. It is not always easy to see a trend or to judge its long-term significance, so it is important to review the data in the full reports carefully, in order to understand why a particular arrow has been assigned. Note that a higher numerical measure may mean a trend in a negative direction: e.g. a higher percent in poverty indicates a negative trend. This would be indicated with a down arrow.


There has been a long-term trend in a positive direction, or most recent data shows a marked improvement


There has been a long-term negative trend, or most recent data shows a significant downturn

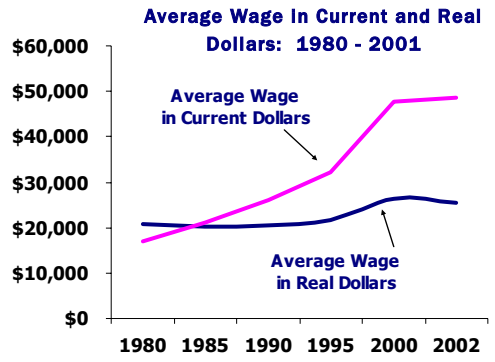

There has been little significant movement in this Indicator, or the trend has been mixed.


There is insufficient reliable trend data for this Indicator

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Outcome: Promote Family Wage Jobs

Indicator 1. Real Wages Per Worker

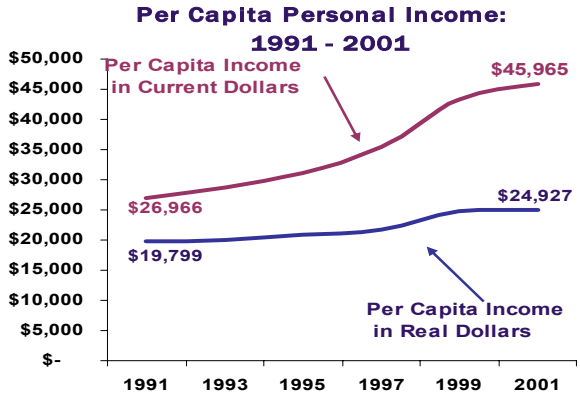


- King County's average annual wage per worker fell for the third year in a row in real (after inflation) dollars, from about $26,400 in 1999 to $25,300 in 2002. However, it remains nearly $5,000 higher than it was in 1990.
- In current dollars, the average annual wage was $47,900.
- When computer software workers are excluded, King County's average annual wage is about $43,400, or about $23,200 in real dollars.
- The average annual wage outside the software sector actually rose about $1,000 in real dollars since 2000.
- These wages reflect the situation of those who were working in King County. They do not reflect the income of the 6.5%* of the workforce who were unemployed during 2002.

*This is the official Washington State Employment Security Department average unemployment rate for 2002. The American Community Survey for 2002 found that 8.7 percent of the King County labor force reported themselves as unemployed. This higher rate may include those who are no longer collecting unemployment compensation or actively looking for work, and thus are not defined as "unemployed" by the ESD.

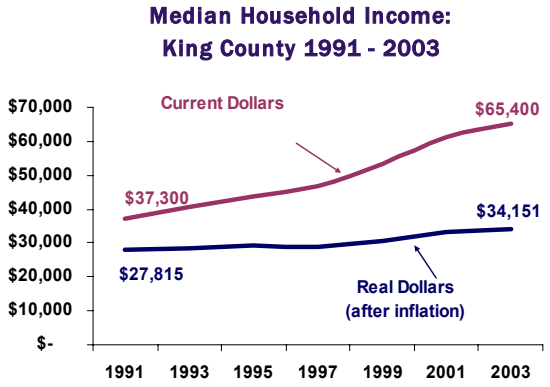
Outcome: Increase Income and Reduce Poverty

Indicator 2. Personal and Median Household Income



Key Trends

- Per capita personal income in King County declined slightly in real terms from 2000 to 2001, the first such decline since 1993. Falling values of securities during 2000-2001 undoubtedly accounts for much of this decline.
- In 2001, the most recent year for which data is available, King County residents had a per capita income that is 151% of the U.S. per capita personal income, compared to 132% in 1990. Despite the slight drop in this percent from 2000 to 2001, KingCounty has made steady gains over the national income rate for the past two decades.

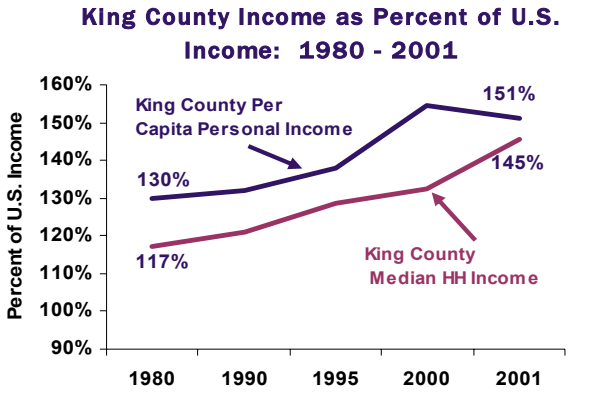


- Median Household Income fell about 1.7% in real dollars from 2002 - 2003, after steady and significant growth throughout most of the previous decade.
- Unemployment, slower growth in wages, and declines in other income sources have all contributed to this leveling of median household income in King County.

For information about the Benchmark Report or the Benchmark Program, please contact Rose Curran, Benchmark Program Coordinator (206) 205-0715; e-mail: rose.curran@metrokc.gov. The Benchmark Program address is King County Office of Management and Budget, Room 402, King County Courthouse, Seattle, WA 98104.

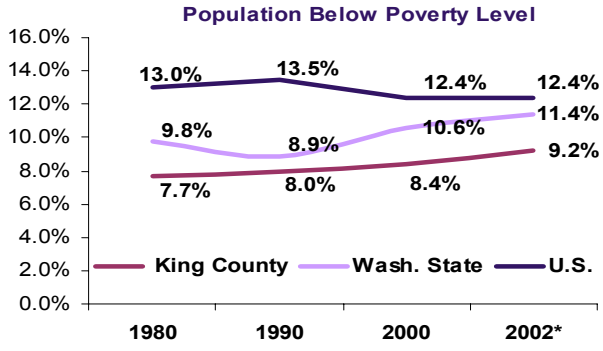
(Indicator 2, continued)

- However, as with per capita personal income, this small decline follows upon a decade of unusually rapid growth in median household income in both current and real dollars.
- Median household income has grown even more dramatically than per capita personal income when compared to the U.S. average. Households in King County earned 145% of the national median income in 2001, and 152% in 2002, up from 121% in 1990.



Note: The KC Median HH Income rose to 152% of U.S. Income in 2002. It is not shown on this graph because there is no comparable data for per capita personal income in 2002.

Indicator 3. Percentage of Population Below Poverty Level.

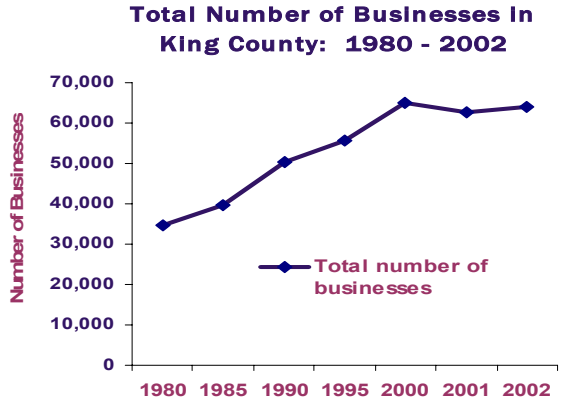


Key Trends

- The poverty rate in King County has risen to 9.2% in 2002. The percent of persons in this County who live in poverty has risen slowly over the last three decades.
- King County's poverty rate remains significantly lower than the national rate. However, the national rate has declined by a full percentage point since 1990, while the King County rate has risen over 2 percentage points.
- In 2002, a family of four had poverty status if its annual income was under $18,300 The poverty threshold is established at the federal level, and does not account for local variation in the cost of living.
- A family of four could afford to pay less than $495 per month in rent, while the average rent for a two bedroom, one bath apartment was $837. Paying market rates for rent often means that there is very little money left for food, transportation, and child or health care.

Outcome: Increase Business Formation, Expansion, and Retention

Indicator 4. New Businesses Created

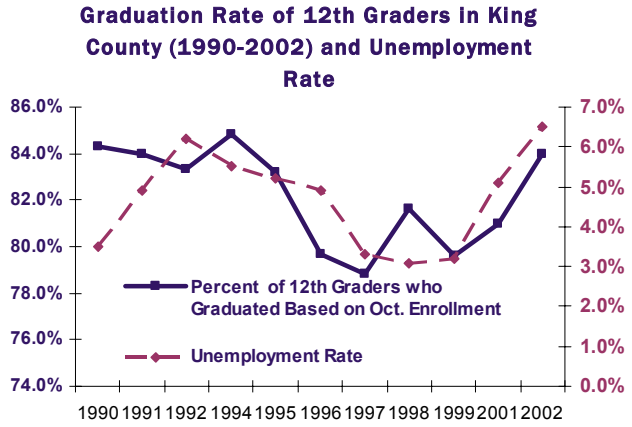


Key Trends

- King County regained over 1,200 businesses from 2001 - 2002. This gain follows on a loss of nearly 2,200 businesses between 2000 and 2001.
- The total number of businesses is now down about 950 from its peak of 65,000 in 2000.
- While the current recession has slowed the development of new businesses, growth is once again moving in a positive direction. The pace of growth over the last five years (1997 - 2002) is just slightly below historic rates, at 1.8% per year.

Outcome: Increase Educational Skill Level

Indicator 8. Twelfth Grade Graduation Rate



*This older series is based on a denominator of the October enrollment of 12th graders. Over time it will be replaced with a series based on a federally-defined 12th grade graduation rate and a cohort graduation rate. Note that data for 1993 and 2000 was unavailable or too questionable to be useful.

Key Trends

- The graph above shows the graduation rate (older series) from 1990 - 2002, along with the unemployment rate during those years. As many studies have shown, the graduation rate tends to rise when unemployment is high and there are few jobs to attract young people away from school. When jobs are abundant, and unemployment is low, high school students are more likely to drop out of school and work.

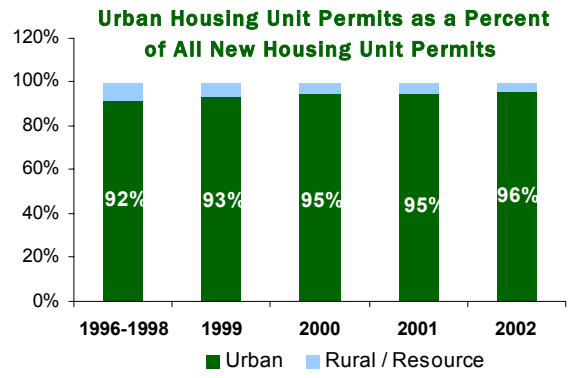
- According to a new data series published by the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), about 80% of enrolled 12th graders in King County graduated in 2001 and 2002. (Column 2 in graph below). This number is not strictly comparable to the earlier series in Column 1 because a different denominator for total enrolled 12th graders is used.

	Percent of 12th Graders who Graduated Based on Oct. Enrollment	Percent of 12th Graders who Graduated Based on Initial Enrollment Minus Transfers Out
1990	84.3%	
1991	84.0%	
1992	83.3%	
1994	84.8%	
1995	83.2%	
1996	79.7%	
1997	78.8%	
1998	81.6%	
1999	79.6%	
2001	81.0%	79.0%
2002	84.0%	80.7%

LAND USE

Outcome: Encourage a Greater Share of Growth in Urban Areas and Urban Centers; Limit Growth in Rural Resource Areas

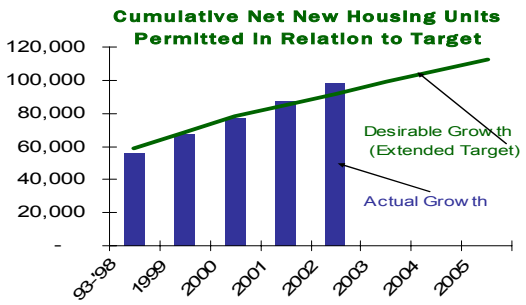
Indicator 30. Percent of New Housing Units in Urban Areas, Rural Areas, and Urban Centers



Key Trends

- The percent of development in the urban area of King County has gradually increased to about 96% in 2002, with just 4% occurring in the rural/resource areas. In comparison to the 1996 – 1998 period, the proportion of new development taking place in the rural areas has been cut in half.

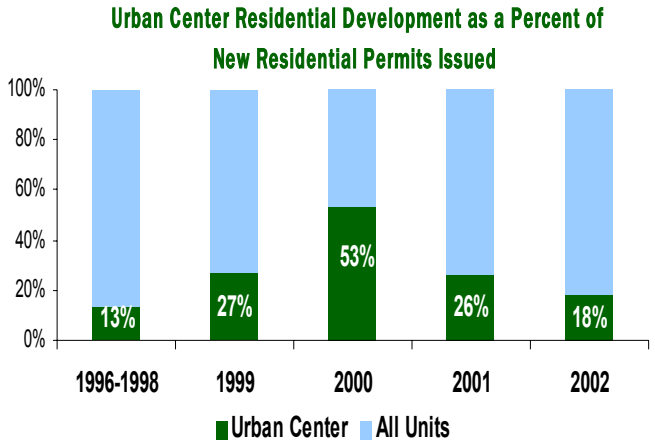
- Countywide residential growth continues to meet or slightly exceed the newly-adopted 22-year growth target.



Extended Target: By 2022, a total of about 230,000 net new housing units should be built in King County, including those built from 1993 - 2000.

(Indicator 30, continued)

- Total new residential development increased about 2% over the 2001 level, at just under 11,000 new units permitted. Despite the recession, permit levels have remained fairly consistent since 1996.
- From 1999 to 2001 King County exceeded its goal that 25% of new residential permits would be located in Urban Centers. In 2002, however, just 18% of new residential permits were issued for Urban Centers.
- Nearly all of the 2002 growth in Urban Centers was in Seattle's five Urban Centers and in Bellevue.
- Bellevue's center had moderate growth with 252 new units, but centers in the suburban cities are not showing continued residential growth during this recession period.

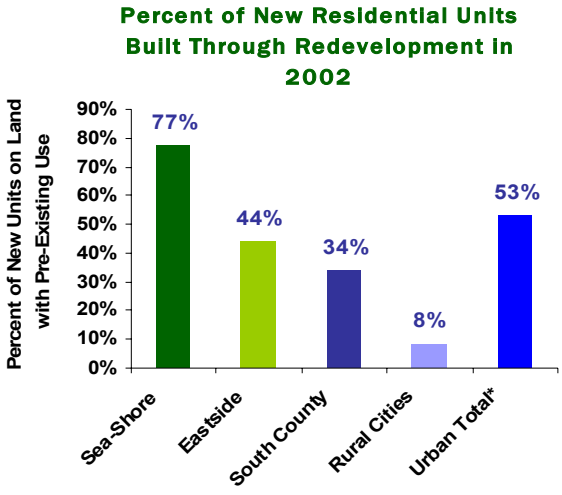


Outcome: Make Efficient Use of Urban Land

Indicator 32. Percent of New Residential Units Built Through Redevelopment

Key Trends

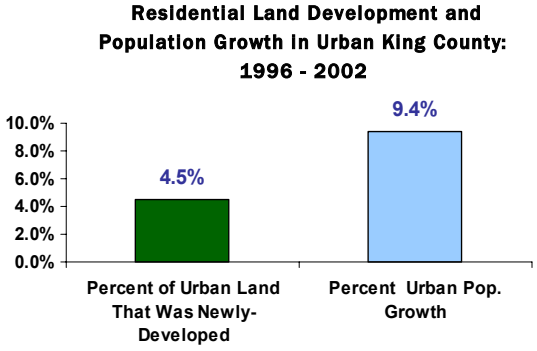
- Within the urban area of King County, 53% of all new residential permits issued in 2002 were on redevelopable land. This figure includes the urban unincorporated area of King County.
- The older and more densely settled sub-region of Sea-Shore has the highest rate of redevelopment at 77%. This is as expected, since there is a very limited amount of vacant land left in this sub-region.
- Cities with a rate of redevelopment over 75% include Seattle, Shoreline, Kenmore, Bellevue, Kirkland, Mercer Island, Burien, and Normandy Park.
- The rural cities and their urban growth areas have the lowest rate of redevelopment - with most development occurring on vacant land.



Indicator 33. Ratio of Land Consumption to Population Growth

Key Trends

- From 1996 through 2002 urban land in King County was consumed at a slower rate than the rate of population growth. This indicates that we are using urban land efficiently as our population continues to grow.
- Urban population grew by about 140,000 persons during this seven year period, a rate of about 9.4% - or about 1.3% per year.
- Approximately 13,350 gross acres of land was newly-developed for residential purposes. This represents 4.5% of the existing urban land area, or 0.64% per year. In other words, the rate of urban land consumption is half the rate of urban population growth.



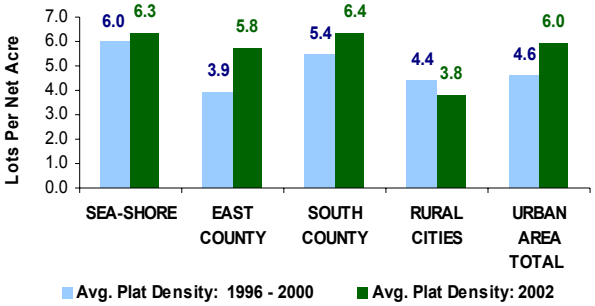
Outcome: Make Efficient Use of Urban Land

Indicator 34: Ratio of Achieved Density to Allowed Density of Residential Development

Key Trends

- There has been a marked improvement in the achievement of planned densities in 2002 when compared to the 1996 to 2000 period.
- This improvement has occurred in both the creation of new plats, and in new development permitted on existing lots.
- The improvement has happened in all sub-regions of the County with the exception of a few zone groups.
- King County jurisdictions have surpassed planned densities in much of their multifamily development.

Change in Achieved Densities on Plats: from 1996-2000* to 2002



*Blue columns represent average densities achieved over the five-year period from 1996 - 2000.

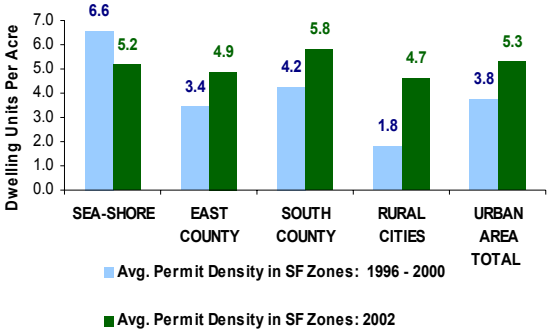
Plat Densities

- The urban region as a whole averaged 6.0 lots per acre on its new single-family plats in 2002. Six lots per acre is considered a benchmark of urban density for single family lots.

Permit Densities

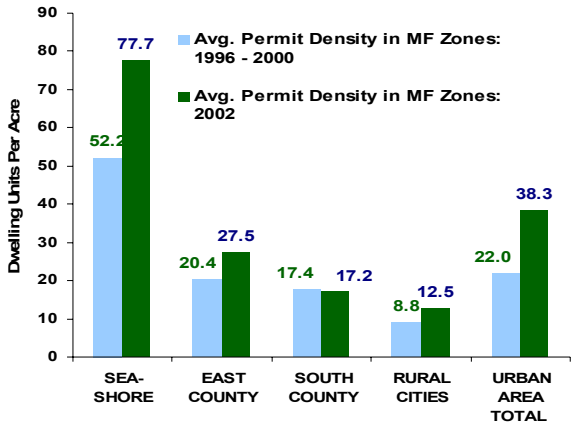
- Permits issued in single family zones in 2002 showed an increase in achieved densities in all regions of the County except for the Sea-Shore sub-region, which includes the already highly-urbanized areas of Seattle, Shoreline, and Lake Forest Park.

Change in Achieved Densities for Permits in Single Family Zones: from 1996-2000 to 2002



- In multifamily zones, however, Sea-Shore has increased its achieved density to an average of 77.7 dwelling units per acre in 2002, from 52.2 dwelling units per acre during the 1996 – 2000 period.

Change in Achieved Densities in Multifamily Zones: 1996-2000 to 2002



- Overall, the cities and urban areas of King County are showing a clear trend toward achieving higher densities and more efficient use of land within the urban areas.

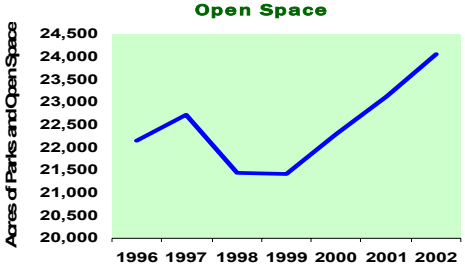
Outcome: Encourage Livable, Diverse Communities

Indicator 37: Acres of Urban Parks and Open Space

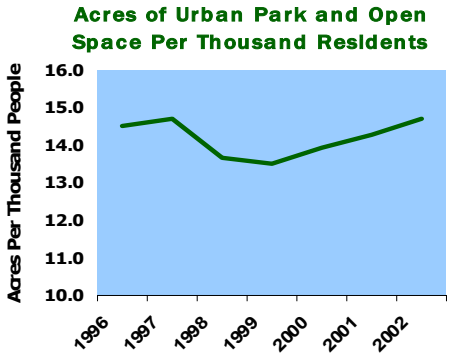
Key Trends

- Total acreage of municipal and regional parks and open space in urban King County has increased by 1,800 acres since 1996, or about 8%.
- The urban population grew by just 7% during this period, resulting in a net increase in park space per resident.

Total Acres of Urban Parks and Open Space

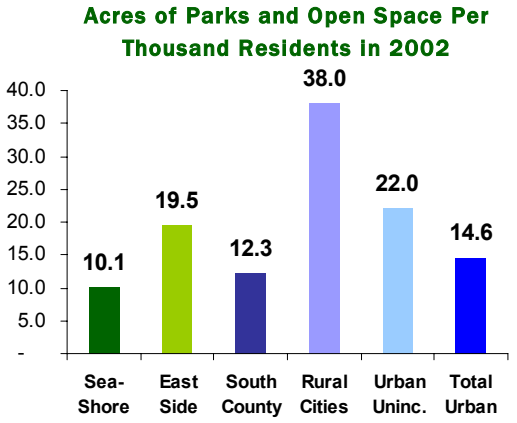


- The acres of parks per thousand residents has nearly regained its 1997 level*, and is now at 14.6 acres per person.



*In 1998 the urban boundary was adjusted, changing Cougar Mtn. Wildland from urban park to rural. This accounts for the severe drop in urban park acreage in that year.

- A number of cities have acquired or created new park land, in addition to acreage that was transferred or annexed.



- The graph shows that the amount of park space per thousand residents differs considerably from one sub-region to another.
- The dedication of new land to parks is needed to maintain and improve the parks-to-resident ratio as the population grows.

Outcome: Maintain the Quality and Quantity of Natural Resource Lands

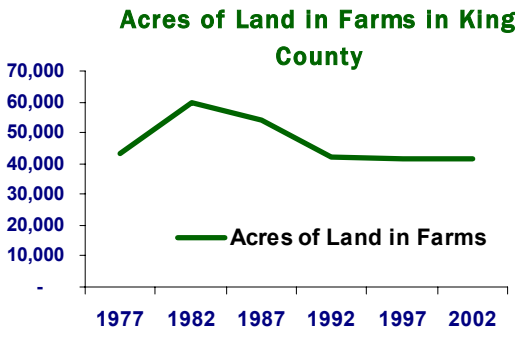
Indicator 39: Acres in Forest Land

Acres of Forest Land in Various Categories			
	1995	2000	2002
Forest Production District			
Federal Ownership	337,000	336,000	351,000
State Ownership	83,000	89,000	90,400
Municipal and County Ownership	94,000	118,000	117,000
Private / Industrial Ownership	310,000	281,000	236,000
NIPF* Ownership			21,000
Other (Water bodies, rights of way, etc.)			9,200
Total Forest Production Area	824,000	824,000	824,600
Rural Forest Focus Areas**			
Federal Ownership			70
State Ownership			4,800
Municipal and County Ownership			7,400
Private / Industrial Ownership			4,800
NIPF* Ownership			33,800
Other (Water bodies, rights of way, etc.)			1,430
	45,000	53,000	52,300
Total Forest Areas**	**869,000**	**877,000**	**876,900**

- There has been no significant change in the total acreage of forest land over the last 7 years.
- Previously - between 1972 and 1996 - areas in King County with forest cover had decreased by 33%.
- There has been a notable increase in ownership by government agencies as opposed to private/ industrial holders. Some of these transfers of ownership have been part of the effort to conserve forest resource land and prevent its conversion to residential development.
- There has been a steady decrease in the number of parcels larger than 25 acres, and an increase in all categories of parcels smaller than 25 acres.

*NIPF = "non-industrial private forestland"

Indicator 40: Acres in Farmland and Number and Average Size of Farms



Key Trends

- There has been very little change in total acres in farms since 1992. From 1982 - 1992 there was a gradual loss of farms to development.
- The number of farms has declined slightly since 1992, with a proportionate increase in the average size of farms. At an average of just 38 acres farm sizes are relatively small in King County.
- The proportion of the total County land area that is being farmed has remained at about 3% since 1992.